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ABSTRACT

Language is not to be considered neutral for it works to establish privileged interpretations of reality that assume the illusion of a shared and natural reality. This study examined how consultants specializing in multicultural organizational interventions construct a particular meaning of "diversity" in their responses to a heterogeneous workforce. Subjects were six human resource development (HRD) consultants selected from three different chapters of the American Society for Training and Development, all between 40 and 50 years old. Individual interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes and were audiotaped and later transcribed for textual analysis. W. B. Pearce's conception of a "cosmopolitan communicator" (understanding another by making the other's social reality a part of the communicator's own lived experience) and a semiotic framework were used to analyze the interview data. Results indicated that two primary characters emerged from the texts of diversity consultants: the HRD professional and the trainee. Actions for diversity trainers most often were signified using terms representing the goals or desired outcomes of an intervention. The symbolic codes operate by unfolding narratives through the setting apart of binary oppositions--such as affirmative action/equal employment opportunity (AA/EEO) versus diversity programs, equality versus equity, and dominant versus subordinate cultures. The HRD professionals work as developers of moral good. Findings suggest how the language of diversity and AA/EEO produce two separate, but fundamentally related, perspectives of workplace discrimination. (Twenty-four references are attached.) (RS)

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In Search of a Cosmopolitan Communicator: Codes of Multicultural Diversity Training

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In Search of a Cosmopolitan Communicator:

Codes of Multicultural Diversity Consultants

Introduction

Dramatic demographic shifts in the United States are creating an increasingly diverse work force. The 1990 census data show that in the state of California alone, the population of whites from European backgrounds went from 66.7 percent of the population in 1980 to 57 percent of the state's population in 1990. This means that nearly 13 million of 29.8 million Californians are from nonwhite or non-eurocentric backgrounds (Barringer, 1991). Much evidence supports the notion that these demographic changes have had an influence on corporate culture (e.g., Adler, 1983; Copeland & Griggs, 1987; Copeland, 1988; Finney, 1989; Hanamura, 1989; C. Solomon, 1989; J. Solomon, 1990; The U. S. Department of Labor, 1987). Corporate responses to these demographic changes and the increased dependency on a global economy correspond with the emergence of directors or managers of "multicultural diversity programs" or "multicultural training seminars." For example, Hewlett-Packard offers a "Managing Diversity" training program, and Avon established a new position called "Director of Multiculturalism" (C. Solomon, 1989, pp. 44-51).

This study focuses on understanding how consultants specializing in multicultural organizational interventions construct a meaning of "diversity" in their responses to an heterogeneous workforce. A basic assumption of this study is that language used by these consultants to understand a problem is conveyed through their discourse and other gestures and affects the understanding of organizational members who participate in the intervention. In fact, the very reason that such a study like this one is undertaken is due in large part to the increasing fervor of talk about the "new alliances" facing a demographically

different workforce. This is the stuff of organizational rhetoric and an invitation for critical study. Whether or not significant differences between culturally unique individuals exist apart from people's experience is an inappropriate question because it objectifies--makes natural--distinctions among people and groups of people which are themselves socially constructed. The linguistic system creates and sustains differences between people, and cultural interventionists in the 1990s establish their credentials on an ability to "solve" culturally motivated problems at work.

Organizational interventions are viewed as a rhetorical occasion, not merely an opportunity for objective discourse about a problem "out there" in the workplace. Language is not to be considered neutral, for it works to establish privileged interpretations of reality that assume the illusion of a shared and natural reality. To the extent that human resource/organizational development consultants rely on language, what becomes the particular meaning of "multicultural diversity" that frames an understanding of their organizational intervention? An organizational intervention is commonly understood as a systematic attempt to improve organizational processes by solving or eliminating obstacles to effective systemic functions. In the case of multicultural issues, the obstacles will be defined as workplace discrimination and prejudice that interfere with "effective communication."

To put it succinctly, a central question of this study can be stated as follows: "How do the actions (language and other gestures) of 'multicultural interventionists' produce a meaning of 'diversity' in their HRD activities?" In order to answer the question we rely on Pearce's (1989) seemingly post-modern conception of a "cosmopolitan communicator" and semiotic method.

Pearce's Cosmopolitan Communicator

Pearce (1989) believes that there is a co-evolutionary relationship between forms of communication and ways of being human. Thus, persons live in

communication, not outside it. Pearce's approach emphasizes how communication works not as a process secondary to human life, but as a primary role in human life. Pearce further acknowledges that "part of what it means to be a human being is to be a storyteller" (p. 21), and that intercultural communication is complicated by multiple stories for the same facts and by the lack of recognition that diverse stories often compete for legitimacy. Pearce further asserts that people have "incommensurate resources" from which to construct their stories. Incommensurate resources refer to the discrepancies among people and groups of people both to access information and to share their stories about the world. It is because people have incommensurate resources that attempts at coordination can fail (Pearce, 1989, p. 62).

The challenge facing the intercultural and multicultural communicator is the difficulty with suspending one's disbelief in the other's story. Rather than accepting our stories as "the order of all things," we need to remain open to other possible ways of experiencing. Moreover, we must recognize that the structure of society directs resources to privileged individuals and simultaneously denies those same resources to others. The other's voice is silenced by instruments of domination, and an alternative story becomes illegitimate against a symphony of dominant narratives. In organizational settings, for example, resources flow from the "top," down to "floor" workers; "higher" status, thus, connotes greater control over resources. Many organizational leaders have long relied upon the "good old [white] boys' network" in order to gain knowledge about the progress of the company. Unfortunately, too many of Kanter's (1977) observations about women of the corporation 14 years ago appear disturbingly true today for women and people of color. She asserted that women have long been implicitly and explicitly denied access to the white boys' network, leaving women (regardless of their organizational position) beyond the reach of an organization's dominant

structure. A woman's story, thus, lacked sufficient detail about "how things really work" and could therefore be dismissed as a less important (i.e., less legitimate) narrative about how organizations operate. The challenge, of course, for diversity interventionists is how they are able to make legitimate, voices that have heretofore been unheard.

Pearce defines communication as involving three elements: coordination, coherence, and mystery. Coordination refers to an attempt to shape the perception of others based on our own visions of "the good, the desirable, and the expedient," and to prevent perceptions of what we perceive as "bad, ugly, and obstructive" (Pearce, 1989, p. 20). It relies on a system of social or cultural rules--shared codes which are a prerequisite to understanding the other. Coordination, therefore, emphasizes how communication is a rule-using social activity.

Coherence, the second element in Pearce's model, is perhaps the most common description of communicative purpose, but for Pearce it is merely part of a calculus. Communication as coherence concerns itself with the creation or discovery of meaning. At their worst, theories of communicative coherence become preoccupied with discovering the "true" or "intended" meaning of a message. For Pearce, coherence refers to the process of storytelling--of being "homo narrans" as Fisher (1989) described it. In this way, coherence reflects our ability to reach understanding through our stories.

Mystery is the recognition that the human condition cannot be explained solely through coordination and coherence. Pearce reminds us that language is imperfect and that there is not one meaning or interpretation to things in our collective lives. Mystery hosts the possibilities of meaning and nurtures the seeds of cultural differences, which are themselves the systematic constraints of a linguistic system. In spite of ourselves, "perfect" coherence is not possible, nor is it particularly desirable; but its presumption is the stuff that preferences one narrative above another. Similarly, coordination becomes problematic for

diverse communities when groups forget that the rules (i.e., structures) of a collectivity, once created, are naturalized, hiding the possibilities of meanings and denying mystery.

Pearce believes that these concepts help one understand four ways society has experienced "communication." First, monocultural communication assumes that people engaging in communication have the same resources and share the same experiences. This way of communicating involves an "unthinking wholeness of experience" that fails to acknowledge difference in the objectified other (Pearce, 1989, p. 97); being human means holding unreflectively to a belief in the natural coherence about the purpose of life.

Second, ethnocentric communication, a pervasive type of communicative action, involves measuring the culturally bound communication of others against one's own cultural perspective; the "true" or "better" meaning is continually cast in favor of the terministic screens of one's own culture. Ethnocentric communicators, in other words, dismiss the stories of out-group members precisely because their stories do not "make sense" (lack narrative coherence) against the measure of the in-group's stories. To be sure, engaging in an ethnocentric script is attractive because it "permits groups to retain their own cultural heritage and to interact with those with other commitments" (Pearce, 1989, p. 131).

Within Pearce's framework a third way of communicating and being human in the world is through modernity. Pearce (1989) believes that modern communication is part of contemporary society. "In modernity, the foundation lies in the present or future rather than the past" (Pearce, 1989, p. 138). Truth is understood to be conditional to the extent that all that is present is moving progressively forward. The future always promises useful progress, for we are caught in a stream of ideas moving deliberately and rationally toward Truth. Modernity has greatly influenced the activity of the academy whereby one

develops a sense of provisionalism and tolerance for the "fact" that "truth is not revealed perfect and complete to men, but must be discovered progressively by trial and error, by investigation, by human effort" (Pearce, 1989, p. 138). Modern communication drives our belief in the perfect progress of society. "Knowledge" represents the process of competing stories laid down end-to-end, ever extending toward truth. Modern communication, therefore, is the progress of a "grand narrative" about an idealized life in which mystery will eventually slip aside, and coherence and coordination will be mastered.

Pearce argues for moving away from modernity and toward a cosmopolitan way of living. The key to becoming a cosmopolitan communicator, Pearce's fourth form of communication, relies on learning a new way of listening. Listening for a cosmopolitan communicator is the process of coming to an understanding of the other by making the other's social reality a part of one's own lived experience. Pearce believes it is this form of communication that will bring about social eloquence. Social eloquence relies on societal or cultural rules. Eloquence depends on a culture's ability to shape rules that leave open possibilities by acknowledging that language itself is value laden and by permitting multifarious interpretations present within linguistic forms. Unlike the other three forms of communication that overstate the value of coherence, the cosmopolitan communicator accepts the mystery of language and appreciates the possibilities of meaning experienced in collective life. Pearce (1989) writes,

> Cosmopolitan communication results from a commitment to find ways of achieving coordination without (1) delaying the existence of humanity of "other" ways of achieving coherence and mystery, as monocultural communication does; or (2) deprecating or opposing "other" ways of achieving coherence and mystery, as ethnocentric communication does; or (3) being committed to a perpetual process of changing one's own way of

> achieving coherence and mystery, as modernistic communication does. When performed well--with high levels of social eloquence--cosmopolitan communication enables coordination among groups with different, even incommensurate, social realities. Unlike other forms of communication, it is particularly sensitive to the unintended consequences of practices and to the nonsummative nature of the logic of interaction. (p. 169)

Pearce believes that four conditions need to be met in order to make possible cosmopolitan communication: truth, time, self, and society. These four conditions "tend to incorporate rather than deny the validity of alternative stories" (Pearce, 1989, p. 190). First, for the cosmopolitan communicator, there is no one truth and if there is, it is many faceted. Second, time is an "historical co-evolutionary process" and people are "localities" within this "co-evolutionary process." Third, the self is distinctive, shaped by local culture and also "enmeshed--to a greater or lesser degree--in the historical development of the logics of meaning and action of particular social systems" (Pearce, 1989, pp. 193-194). Fourth, society "consists of stories and skills" (Pearce, 1989, p. 195)--i.e., traditions and traditional practices.

Remembering that cosmopolitan communication has not reached a societal level, Pearce (1989) believes that "a society (re)constructed by cosmopolitan communication will be uniquely self-conscious, and will have a unique concept of itself" (pp. 194-195). Pearce gives added importance to the unfolding of our historical human condition and communication by believing that "society consists of stories and skills. The level of technological development, form of economy, network of power relationships, and so on, exert a shaping but not determining influence on practices" (Pearce, 1989, p. 195). Thus, our human condition relies more on our form of communication as it historically evolves, than on concepts such as economics and politics. The next section of the paper will explain how semiotics was used as a method for framing Pearce's theory of

the cosmopolitan communicator for this project.

Semiotic Method

Semiotics is a science of signs and the study of the process of signification (see Barthes, 1967; Fiske, 1982, 1987; Manning, 1987; Silverman, 1983). Semiotics attempts to describe how people derive meaning from a text. A semiotic analysis, then, focuses on the elements that work to produce meaning within a text; the elements of semiotic attention include signs, codes, and myth. Signs include anything capable of carrying "meaning"--smells, visual images, sounds, etc. Codes refer to the rules or structure that give systematic meaning to a sign. For example, the rather bland reproduction and the formal writing style of the paper before you is a code of academic reporting. We are "supposed to be" stiff, formal, and bland, for it supports a myth of objectivity. Myth, then, represents superior codes, particularly ones that hold nearly ideological significance for a text.

Barthes believed that the structure of a text was an "interweaving of voices which are shared by reader and writer and which cross the boundaries of the text itself to link it to other texts and to culture in general" (Fiske, 1989, p. 142). Barthes (1974) organized these voices into five codes which work to produce meaning for a text: symbolic, semic, referential, proairetic, and hermeneutic codes. (1) The symbolic code drives the fundamental binary oppositions important in a particular text and within a specific culture. For example, one binary opposition found among diversity consultants is simply the distinction between a dominant culture and a subordinate one. (2) The semic code works to distinguish one character in a story from another and helps to define the objects or settings in the narrative. (3) The referential code allows the text to "refer" beyond itself; it serves as a clue to what is held as "common sense"--a concept, though useful, may be problematic, for cultural differences are most often disagreements over what is considered to be "common." (4) The proairetic code, or more simply code of action, works to define sequences of action in a story. For

example, in popular television dramas we regularly can demarcate a chase scene from a love scene. (5) Lastly, the hermeneutic code is a more general code governing how a text presents, deals with, and finally resolves the story's enigma; it is motivated by our desire for closure and optimism about progress toward truth. It controls the pace and style of the narrative by withholding information desired by the reader to solve the enigma (Fiske, 1989).

Selection of Interviewees

Barthes five codes served as the semiotic framework for analyzing the interviews of six diversity consultants. Participants were selected from three different chapters of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) in Northern California. Permission was obtained from the chapter presidents before prospective interviewees were called. The six HRD professionals represented each of the following contexts: 1 in-house trainer for private industry, 4 independent private consultants, and 1 state consultant. Four were males, and two were females. With regard to ethnicity/race, the group included 4 Black/African Americans, 1 Filipino, and 1 Caucasian. All interviewees were between forty and fifty years old. Individual interviews were scheduled allowing for face-to-face interviews that lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. Responses to the interview questions (see appendix) were recorded on audio-tape and transcriptions served as the basis for the textual analysis.

Analysis

"I am a Professional"

Recalling that the semic code constructs a meaning of major characters in a text, two primary characters emerge from the voices of diversity consultants. The first and most important is the creation of the HRD "professional." The professional depends upon several subordinate semic codes including the educated person, the learner, the trainer, the ethnic person, and the business

person. Following the analysis of the professional, we will discuss the second major character--the trainee--who works to define the object of diversity training and distinguishes the professional's various roles.

The professional is distinct from "practitioner" by three signs repeatedly found in the interview transcripts. One is a professional because of "education," "knowledge" of HRD and one's industry, and "competence" in his/her specialty (i.e., diversity interventions). To be sure, education was an ambiguous sign. On the one hand, education signified a strategy for breaking participants of cultural stereotypes (i.e., patterns prohibiting them from appreciating the cultural other). In this case, education meant bringing about awareness and acceptance of diversity in the workplace. As one interviewee stated, her purpose was to "take a group of individuals with a certain skill level and move them up to another level." Diversity training, then, involved education as strategy whereby people learned the techniques to survive in a multicultural workplace.

Education also signified the credentials of the interviewees. In the course of the interviews, all six HRD professionals talked about their education. At least eighteen degrees were held among the six people interviewed, and all considered a formal degree important in establishing credibility. As one interviewee stated, "I felt that if I went back to school, I would study communication because it would enhance my abilities [as] a professional in this setting." This same interviewee later stated that he felt that as much education as one can achieve is helpful in one's career. Another male interviewee stated, "My additional degrees gave me the additional skills at my organization to do a better job at what I was doing." Education, therefore, was valuable because it defined the practitioner as a model learner (they practiced what they themselves do) and helped interviewees feel a sense of their own professional credentials.

Relatedly, then, is the notion that a professional is also a learner. This code included the trainer as a learner who, aside from formal education, had gained

something at a particular training group session or from a particular client. For example, one trainer shared a story of when he had to work under a supervisor with a different management approach than his own. He learned there was value to his manager's approach that he might not have considered otherwise.

A third aspect of this semic code was the HRD professional as trainer. The voice of trainer was most likely to emerge when the interviewees were asked about their background. Then they would talk of their different formalized backgrounds, educational preparation, and work experiences. They spoke of specific experiences in training, or their models and philosophies in training generally and diversity training specifically. This code was especially recognizable when the interviewees used abbreviations, names of theorists, or models to tell of their experiences. One trainer stated that she had done all of the following types of training: "management, situational leadership, interpersonal skills, and quality training." She had also used several different perspectives including "Wilson, Hersey, and Phil Crosby." These are all models, perspectives, and training programs that someone familiar with the area of HRD would likely recognize. Another trainer stated, "My contribution is to be able to talk to people and to share information and to get people involved in activities that will positively affect them." In this way, the professional as trainer often worked to signify competency in HRD.

The fourth aspect of the HRD professional was that of "the ethnic person." Of the six participants, all but one acknowledged their ethnicity, race, and/or gender as affecting how they understood workplace diversity. At times, people spoke of what it was like going into an organization as a "person of color," and other times they spoke of their experiences organizing or joining groups concerned with a lack of ethnic/racial representation at the higher organizational levels. Although one interviewee was white, we found no white

males to interview because none were known to us who led diversity interventions.

One Black American interviewee made the following comment during the course of the interview, "From one person of color to another," redirecting the conversation from that of human resource professional to that of ethnic person. This statement implicated the interviewer (Sanchez), who is a Mexican American, influencing in unaccountable ways the participant's responses. Ethnicity was revealed differently in a separate interview with another Black American participant. In response to a question on training needs assessment, he stated,

> Sometimes people think I am trying to create a cultural hierarchy. Others have problems not having a clearly identified culture. Others think it is a cultural hierarchy where they are trying to fight for my respect, or that somehow I am there to beat up on White people. . . . When I walk in the room, there is a wondering about what language I am going to use, what type of Black man I am, and I think a lot of that is natural. . . .

This response signifies this man's awareness that his ethnicity affected the training environment. Although ethnicity may not be a necessary condition in order to be a diversity trainer, the code of ethnicity affected how these HRD professionals approached their training situations.

The Trainee's Job

The second important character identified in the transcripts of diversity consultants was the trainee. The interviewees spoke of the considerations they took when doing training, including in some cases doing cultural audits to find out more about the trainees. These audits played an important role in the exercises (e.g., experiences or games) of some diversity trainers. While discussing how one needs to take into consideration who one is training, an interviewee mentioned that her job required her to work with many people for whom English was a second language (ESL). As she described it,

> Very often, we see people treat others who are different as less than intelligent. These people are usually very bright, but have not mastered English. Some people use nondiplomatic talk; they talk down and show illustrations that sixth graders could understand. This is very demeaning. (emphasis added)

The interviewees also discussed how, at times, trainees "resist" or "confront" one another or the trainer. For example, one female trainer shared,

> People will sabotage you if people don't buy into your training. Focus groups ahead of time to find out what the issues are, guard against sabotage. Later you should reinforce people by using some of the things brought up in the focus groups. Reward people for participating even if only by public recognition.

Two specific obstacles were considered by the interviewees; one was the trainees' "pre-existing attitudes" toward training, change, and "different" people, and the other was coming into a training or consulting situation where a "conflict" (usually racially or ethnically motivated) presumably existed.

The trainers made positive references about the trainee when they spoke of people "willing to change," "wanting to learn," "understanding," "becoming aware," and "valuing differences." Ideal trainees, thus, were people who were willing to be or had been transformed by a lesson. The trainee's job was to be "changed" by the training. Specifically, an ideal trainee was one who upon "graduating" from a diversity seminar had acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes; training was somehow supposed to transform (or make transformation possible for) the trainee. Now more skilled and better informed, the trainee held a better chance of dealing with obstacles common to a heterogeneous workplace.

Common Knowledge

Referential codes allow the text to refer beyond itself to what a culture

believes to be common sense. A few of these codes have been included in the semic codes, such as the ethnic code and the HRD professional code. Both of these codes served to link the interviewer and the interviewee by ethnicity/race and by knowledge of HRD practices. Thus, these semic codes were rules both for forming personal identification and for agreeing upon professional vocabulary.

Another cultural code was that of Affirmative Action. The relative ages of the HRD professionals indicate that they experienced the enactment of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Of the six interviewees, two had been affirmative action officers or responsible for implementing an affirmative action plan. Others made reference to the difference between regulated programs in the past (e.g., AA/EEO) and the voluntary programs of the present. One interviewee made the following differentiation: "We are talking about things that were government mandated, dealt with social injustice, organizational resistance, and as a result, internally the organization targeted groups." In this conversation, he shared that EEO audits of the past asked how many Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Women, and Veterans an organization employed, and that "EEO and AA were concerned with the mandated implementation of legislation from a federal government about employment." Another interviewee stated,

> The message that people were getting about Affirmative Action was that [their traditional practice] was against the law, and that you were required by law to treat everyone equally. Some people took this very literally by saying, "I'm going to treat everyone the same." And that was something that I always had a problem with; the law requires me to treat everyone the same, but how can I help managers if everyone is different. And that was the conflict that I realized in the 1970s. I'm doing my best, and I'm committed to A.A. but the process is lacking. . . . With training, people say, "We do treat everyone the same, but we're still getting in trouble." And I

would come in and say, "It's treating people with equality, not equity, that is fair."

A final cultural code, closely related to the conversation about AA/EEO, relates to the Workforce 2000 study. "Workforce 2000" was a 1987 study published by the Department of Labor that predicted how significant demographic changes could drastically affect the workplace by the year 2000. "Workforce 2000" is important to this discussion not as a source of empirical evidence, but as a signifier common among these six interviewees. All were aware of the study and its findings, and each used it in different ways to justify their own training or as a source of training information.

One interviewee in explaining his diversity program stated, "I do awareness presentations on what the findings of the Workforce 2000 report are. Then we talk about the impact of those results on a given client's system, and that could be both internally and externally." Another interviewee referred only to "seven major trends" and did not directly name those trends as coming from Workforce 2000. In order to understand this statement and others like it, the Workforce 2000 report had to operate as "common sense" knowledge. Whether or not the report is "true" is irrelevant; rather it represents an important reference that is held to be true by the interviewees. The report is important, too, because it provides a rationale for the legitimacy of something called "multicultural diversity interventions" by establishing itself upon the commonly held legitimacy of the Department of Labor, a federal agency recognized widely by management and business. Ironically, the Department of Labor also represents the same federal agency that shared responsibility for EEO/AA regulations and enforcement.

Representing an acceptance of the Workforce 2000 report as legitimate, one interviewee asserted,

Some people are almost treating [the Workforce 2000 report] like the law of the land which it isn't. It is just the paradigm shift, and [gives] you another

> way to look at it. The other way they are giving you to look at it is asking , "What would happen if you were in a situation where you could not hire the kind of people you are hiring today?" Workforce 2000 says that is exactly what is going to happen. Affirmative action guidelines and training said, "You have no choice but to follow the law." Workforce 2000 and diversity say, "You have a choice." The choice is you can continue to make the effort to use the same policies and procedures in your human resource/personnel to function and see what it does to your bottom-line. Or you can choose another path and that is to re-examine all of your procedures and policies, to take a look at and do an assessment with people who are already working for you, especially your managers and supervisors, and ask what are their habits that they have learned in treating people of difference, people from other cultures. What you will be finding as we go through the decade of the nineties and then 2000 is that there are some changing ground rules, that certain codes of behavior just don't apply with the people that are now coming into the workforce. Certain habits need to be unlearned that people have, that either will confuse or alienate people that come from a different culture. (emphasis added)

This interviewee believed that the Workforce 2000 report documents a radical shift--a paradigm shift--in the way business will be conducted in the future. Past strategies for dealing with workplace discrimination are not only insufficient, but bankrupt, because they fail to address satisfactorily the skills needed to survive in a heterogeneous workplace. Workplace change, thus, necessitates behavioral change for those who will comprise the new workforce. In short, by discussing the cultural codes of AA/EEO and Workforce 2000, interviewees were able to set up a context for discussing and justifying their diversity training perspectives. This context was made up of certain actions that the human resource professional sets as goals for their client or trainee.

Teaching & Empowering: Action Codes

Barthes' fourth code is the proairetic code (code of action). Action codes suggest "that we understand any action in a narrative by our experience of similar actions in other narratives, and that our narrative experience is an aggregation of details arranged in generic categories of actions" (Fiske, 1989, p. 143). According to Barthes (1974), "A sequence exists when and because it can be given a name, it unfolds as this process of naming takes place, as a title is sought or confirmed; its basis is more empirical than rational" (p. 19).

Actions for diversity trainers most often were signified using terms such as "training," "managing diversity," "valuing diversity," "appreciating difference," "empowering," listening," "learning," and "visioning." These terms represent the goals or desired outcomes of an intervention. As one trainer stated, "One of the things I do is help my clients . . . work on issues of managing a culturally diverse workforce" (emphasis added). A second trainer said, "The best way to treat them equally is to respect those differences, and see those differences not as problems but as resources"(emphasis added). This trainer went on to say that he enjoyed training in which people could "reflect on how we are different and how can we bring all these differences into this room and empower each other with that."

In these two instances, as with most of the action terms, the action sequence itself appears elusive. How does one "see" somebody's "value differences"? The answer lies beyond the first-level signifier and more within the larger action sequence of "doing training." For the interviewees, the act of conducting, facilitating, or leading a diversity intervention was the more significant action code. Metaphorically, "training" became both a place where and a process whereby people (if they so choose) were "moved" mentally from a stagnant place toward a more knowing world view. The process of learning, thus conceived, represented a metaphor of movement up toward a "higher" plane of appreciation

for diverse opinions and actions. To make the movement possible, the trainer had to be "open" communicatively to "where" the learner was "coming from," or to be able to "see" expressively from "where" the learner was "positioned" in order to direct effectively the "energy" necessary for making movement possible. Training is the act of moving people so they can "see" from places that they previously did not know existed.

For example, one interviewee described the work of a trainer as follows: "The basic way, the most effective way to respect an individual is to listen and let that person know that you are listening." Another said, "To me, valuing differences is just being able to see how other people see. You don't have to agree with it, disagree with it, you just have to understand it." A third interviewee said, "We need to recognize our concerns and fears." And finally, a fourth asserted, "Working with diversity [means] really learning to work with a group of people and being able to incorporate all those energies together to create new possibilities." Thus, action codes were important for trainers to set their expectations with regard to their training.

Voluntary and Mandatory, With and Without Color

The symbolic codes operate by unfolding narratives through the setting apart of binary oppositions. One first binary opposite was the distinction between AA/EEO and Diversity Programs. AA/EEO measures were understood as mandated policy and government intervention, whereas "diversity" was seen as people voluntarily taking action against workplace discrimination. One interviewee believed, "When we talk about EEO/AA, we are talking about the things that were government mandated" (emphasis added). Human resource diversity issues, on the other hand, signified "quality of workplace issues;" as one trainer observed, "diversity [e.g., training and diversity interventions] . . . is different from AA in that there is no law that says you have to do this" (emphasis added). Diversity, therefore, permitted free choice whereas AA/EEO represented a forced choice.

A second symbolic code was that of equality versus equity. Whereas "equity" was seen as treating people the same without regard for differences, "equality" signified treating people with regard to differences. This binary opposition supported numerous dichotomies for the interviewees such as cultural understanding versus stereotyping, ignoring differences versus acknowledging differences, "being culturally aware" versus "not being culturally aware," "accepting others" versus rejecting others (particularly rejecting the other's experience), and untested self-perceptions versus "perception checking."

Additional binary oppositions are found between dominant culture and subordinate culture, majority and minority, being ethnic and being White, and individualistic cultures and interdependent cultures. Whereas the other two sets of binary oppositions issue from a political debate over workplace discrimination and from a distinction over interpersonal and intellectual versatility, this third set of binary opposition rests upon distinctions over what is "culture" and how it is experienced at work.

One trainer explained that he looked for two things when arranging a contract: "The comfort levels of people who are culturally and ethnically different who work for the company, but you are also looking at the negative rubs at how the corporate culture rubs against the grain of the ethnic cultures inside the organization." Two other trainers talked about working with people who do not have any regard for what it is like to be "different." One explained how trainees resisted multicultural change: "Basically, managers when we would do these things, did not want to be there, especially if they were not 'people of color,' if they were White managers." The other trainer, a Black/African American, stated, "What I'm saying is that for as much as I'm aware of how I am different, many people are unaware and are, therefore, not sensitive to issues." Ethnicity was a factor for both trainers and trainees. The ethnicity of the people

who receive training had to be considered, as well as a judgment by the trainer of the organization's willingness to talk openly about ethnicity. The enigma for the trainer became getting people to think positively about the issue of diversity and ethnicity in the workplace.

The Myth of Moral Developer

These HRD professionals work as developers of moral good. Although trainers often did not address morals directly, they talk of their work as multicultural interventionists as one talks about converting people from what is wrong to what is right in the world. As moral developer, trainers guide others to a nobler world--a world in which people "value" the uniqueness of the other.

Four interviewees talked about people as being "innately good." One spoke of helping people to become "human ambassadors." Another interviewee discussed "the essential human being," and a fourth referred to people as "treasures." A fifth interviewee explained how people live by "basic principles of human conduct and human dignity."

These trainers presumed that people possessed a human psyche, that is at once unique and universal, and that this internal self is guided by moral reasons. When the HRD professionals referred to their role as trainers, they discussed how people in the workplace need to be guided through the morals mazes that keep us from being both heterogeneous and harmonious. They represented the moral guides who were themselves skilled at dealing with past experiences and capable of sharing of their knowledge and expertise in order to help trainees better understanding the requirements of a new heterogeneous workplace.

Toward Cosmopolitan Communication

Diversity training and AA/EEO share a common objective; both were concerned with eliminating discriminatory action in the workplace. Although AA/EEO and diversity training share a common objective, they disagree on how to achieve it. The language of AA/EEO relied upon a rational-legal system of rules

typical of modernity; progress was ensured because rational discussion had led to certain "truths" about workplace discrimination. AA/EEO regulations reflected objective language--unconscious perhaps of the irony of mixing objectivity with human subjectivity; nevertheless, regulations ensured progress toward the elimination of workplace discrimination.

The language of diversity programs, on the other hand, turns against AA/EEO by rejecting the imposition of a superior will (e.g., the federal government said "thou shall not discriminate") and embracing language's ability to bring people together. While not recognized as such by the interviewees, rhetoric takes on special importance for the diversity consultant. Having rejected "mandated" programs, diversity consultants want to use language in such ways as to persuade organizations to move along a continuum of becoming more "multicultural" and to help organizational members to move toward more sincere appreciation (consubstantially, perhaps) of the other. The focus is not discrimination, like AA/EEO programs maintained, but rather prejudice.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a prevailing perspective was that subcultures could be changed to resemble dominant culture. In this way, the dominant culture became the measure of social reality, and the modernistic perspective understood such transformations as progress. The diversity consultants represent a challenge to AA/EEO and modernistic understanding of discrimination. In this study, diversity consultants associate AA/EEO with stagnation, lack of progress, and ineffective government policies, and consider the rational-legal attempt to create an homogeneous culture a failure.

Diversity represents an alternative sign, separate from its predecessor AA/EEO. According to these experts, diversity signifies a new direction, much needed change, a pro-active intervention, and a non-governmentally decreed strategy. Diversity signifies a new direction in dealing with discrimination established upon pro-active, free-willed individuals. Diversity, to be sure, echoes

AA/EEO rhetorically as "new and improved;" yet, the creation of any enterprise depends largely on establishing its credibility by distinguishing it from what came before.

Yet, do the practices of diversity interventions move dramatically from the modernistic communicator to the cosmopolitan communicator? Furthermore, are diversity interventions more successful than AA/EEO in developing the skills of social eloquence? Pearce's concepts of coordination and coherence helped to frame the stories of the six HRD professionals. The story of diversity training focuses on coordination, whereas the story of AA/EEO focuses on coherence. That is to say that in the interviews, the diversity trainers believed that organizational members lacked the skills to reach consensus on the rules and to achieve a harmonious (rather than a homogeneous) workplace. In this regard, the diversity trainers believed that it was important to agree on the rules rather than past AA/EEO practices that emphasized message clarity (e.g., the law is or is not clear).

This study provided an understanding of how the language of diversity and AA/EEO produce two separate, but fundamentally related, perspectives of workplace discrimination. In order for diversity interventions to establish their credibility, they had to establish a conceptual system different from the pejorative AA/EEO. Nevertheless, both AA/EEO and diversity interventions appear preoccupied with discovering the set of moral skills necessary for righting individual ills and achieving social harmony. Whether diversity interventionists are more skilled or more correct in their strategy than their colleagues leading AA/EEO programs has yet to be seen.

Pearce's theoretical position of the cosmopolitan communicator, thus, becomes problematic. Pearce (1989) used an individualistic label of "cosmopolitan communicator." The emphasis on an ideal communicator turns attention to the

individual and the individual's behavior and turns subtly away from social eloquence by displacing the relational force of communication. Social eloquence works to establish and maintain relationships through the extension of self beyond our own polis (as the Greeks understood "cosmopolitan"). Social eloquence, therefore, is more correctly an aspect of a relationship rather than the behavior of an individual communicator. Social eloquence is like a dance in which neither party knows the rules save one: let the gesture of the moment make possible the next. In all fairness, Pearce's conception requires only a minor perspectival shift from cosmopolitan communicator to cosmopolitan communication. Such a subtle shift refocuses multicultural competence as something akin to "interpersonal versatility," as opposed to "intellectual versatility." The former holds the relationship and, by extension, the community as its ethic. In other words, interpersonal versatility presumes that the self is defined by the community and is more than the aggregate of all its relationships; the self does not necessarily define the community as popularly conceived in most western versions of individualism. Unfortunately, "intellectual versatility" appears more like the stuff of diversity interventions, for it preserves the popular forms of individualism. If this is so, then multicultural diversity interventions are likely to be insufficient for resolving cultural differences because they will have situated communicative competence in the expressive and knowledgeable individual.

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